



# SECTION D

## PUBLIC UTILITIES, PROPANE, AND CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARDS

### INTRODUCTION

The following three chapters discuss the potential hazards associated with electric, natural gas, and propane facilities and carbon monoxide emergencies. What first responders do not know about utility hazards can and has killed them. It is vital that potential hazards associated with electric, natural gas, and propane facilities and carbon monoxide be integrated into your fire departments emergency standard operating guidance (“SOGs”) and hazard assessments. These chapters on utility and energy safety provide a starting point for first responders to recognize and avoid potential utility hazards. It is strongly recommended that fire departments meet periodically with utilities and energy providers in their emergency response area to review capabilities and specific facility concerns and establish SOGs based on the specific potential utility and energy hazards in their area. The purpose of this program is to:

- help you to understand the properties of energy,
- give you a basic knowledge of how the utilities and energy systems work,
- make you aware of the hazards associated with those systems, and
- offer approaches for responding to utility and energy emergencies.

Utilities and energy services may be encountered in responding to virtually every emergency. The primary and first assessment focus is always life safety. When electric, natural gas, or propane facilities are

involved, the only emergency response may be to secure the area, protect nearby properties, and wait for the power or gas to be shut off or dissipate. Life safety includes your safety and that of the other first responders. The most difficult aspect of the emergency response may be waiting for the electricity, gas, or propane to be rendered safe before proceeding. Detection and utility emergency response equipment has to be calibrated, tested, and maintained to ensure that this equipment is safe and personnel are trained to use such equipment. Attempting to shut off the electric, natural gas, or propane facilities without the proper training, equipment, or experience may be fatal. Having the utility shut off the power or energy is the safest approach. While the three chapters will offer approaches for responding to emergency situations, not all potential hazards can be described. Only through training, experience, practice, and continuous learning will a first responder be able to remain safe and effectively manage an emergency. Many of the potential hazards may be hidden or not apparent at first. Being aware of the broad safety aspects of emergency response and careful evaluation of the specific emergency will reduce your exposure to these hidden hazards. It is hoped that these chapters will help you better understand and determine what precautions need to be taken when responding to utility and energy emergencies.

It is our fervent hope that you start your path as a first responder with the information, knowledge, and training needed to keep you and your fellow responders safe. The information in these three chapters is one step on that path.

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